

MEDIA RELEASE

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New Study Reveals Agribusiness Number One Industry in SC *Farming and Forestry have \$33.9 billion in economic impact*

Modern agribusiness has eclipsed manufacturing and tourism as South Carolina's leading economic cluster, according to a new study released today by the South Carolina Agribusiness Council (PABC) and the South Carolina Forestry Commission. Agribusiness includes all aspects of farming and forestry

The study was conducted over a period of nine (9) months by Dr. Harry Miley of Gallo and Associates of Greenville, S.C. The new research shows that all commodities and services in modern agribusiness, taken together, have a \$33.9 billion impact on South Carolina's economy, larger than any other sector.

Also, as employment in other parts of the economy has declined, agribusiness is growing and now provides jobs for nearly 200,000 South Carolinians. "The bottom line is that South Carolina's oldest industry has entered the twenty-first century with great promise in the emerging economy," Miley said.

A former chairman of the S.C. Board of Economic Advisors and chief economist under Governor Carroll Campbell, Miley said he based his research on impact models generated by the IMPLAN system. "The data clearly shows that Agribusiness is growing and has become the largest sector in our state's economy," Miley said. He cited the following factors:

- Agribusiness is making an increasingly large contribution to labor income, output and jobs.
- The agribusiness industry generates a total output of direct and indirect activity of \$7.5 billion in annual labor income.
- The agribusiness industry is also a major job producer, with direct and indirect employment of 199,469 of the State's jobs.

Several policy makers and agribusiness leaders were on hand at a press briefing held at the South Carolina Department of Agriculture in Columbia. The findings of the study were greeted with enthusiasm.

"This research confirms that South Carolina's oldest industry is now a critically important part of the knowledge based economy," said Edgar Woods, chairman of the Palmetto Agribusiness Council. "The industry that provides consumers with food, clothing and shelter is the dominant economic force in our state. Our challenge now is to accelerate the application of new technologies and new methods to agribusiness to strengthen South Carolina's economic future," he added.

Forestry officials made the case that emerging technologies for alternative fuels will help the agribusiness sector grow even faster in the years ahead. "This is just the beginning compared to what

we are likely to see in the coming decades, said Bob Scott, executive director of the S.C. Forestry Association. “Whether its carbon credits or biofuels, South Carolina will be on the cutting edge.”

Hugh Weathers, Secretary of Agriculture, said he hopes this new research will open the eyes of the State’s economic policy makers to the “present power and future potential” of agribusiness. “In energy development, conservation and emerging technologies, modern agribusiness can have a positive impact on our future in ways we can’t even imagine today,” Weathers said.

SC Representative, Jeff Duncan, a member of the House Agriculture Committee, called on members of the state legislature to look closely at the results of the study. “Agriculture should not be seen as what our State used to be. It’s the backbone of our economy,” he said. “As elected officials, we have a responsibility to do all we can to support growth in the agribusiness sector. Our future depends on it.”

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